

/57 cont. /

Estimated Age (315)

551
162
(802)

315. These Indians count only to three, so I could only estimate the ages given.

Hewemão (316) -- chief and medicine man

42 years

(123)

316. I was able to learn all the names only after my adoption into the tribe, for they are kept a strict secret from outsiders. But even then the individual men and women themselves never told them to me; I learned the names only from other members of the tribe, and, to be sure, always in a whisper. If they call each other in a loud voice, they use Portuguese names which they have heard from palm-fiber gatherers. I too had to give names to several members of the tribe.

Koentemã -- his first wife (from the Pakidã tribe)

24 years

Kanikawõ -- son

8 years

Daughter (has no name yet (317)

1 year

• (553)

317. Children are given their names only after the completion of their third year (see pp. 201 ff.).

Yaripanamã -- his second wife (from the Aramamesteri tribe) (She had a daughter who died in infancy.)

35 years

Maxinamã -- daughter of Hewemão and his former wife Tafmakãna, who died in childbirth

9 years

Surata
Pakida

/62 cont. / - The father

of the child later hangs it on the tip of a pupunha palm

(Guillielma speciosa Mart.), which is connected with fertility

magic; he buries the afterbirth in the planting. Two confinements which I was able to observe were very easy and quick.

On the lower part of the children's back I could see in each case the grayish-black spots of pigment, the so-called Mongolian spots.

Immediately after birth, the mother with her baby took a bath at the nearby riverbank and then lay down in her hammock for one or two hours. After that, with the baby on her arm, she already went back to her customary occupation.

If a complication arises during confinement, the chief, who is at the same time the witch doctor, is fetched.

In contrast to most other Indian tribes, twins are reared.

If there should be triplets, which so far has never occurred, one child would have to be killed, for, as they said, the mother has only two breasts. Deformed children are killed and thrown into the river.

There are no birth ceremonies, for up to its third year of life the child belongs to the flesh and blood of its mother and is not given a name before this.

d) Infancy and early childhood

The infant or young child is not left alone for a moment. When the mother attends to her housework or gathers fruits and berries in the forest, she carries it in a carrying band of tree bast on her left hip, so that she has the right hand free for her work.

Even at night it sleeps with her in the hammock. The breast is constantly at its disposal, so that it never /63/ thinks of sucking its finger. This may perhaps also explain why these Indians have such a perfect set of teeth. As soon as the teeth start coming in, the child is given tough meat to chew on, in order to facilitate teething. At the same time the long period of nursing, along with abundant sunshine, prevents rickets. After 3-4 months the baby is given supplementary food in the form of cooked, green mealy bananas (Musa paradisiaca normalis), which are prechewed by the mother, or a porridge made out of manioc flat-cakes.

Surára
Pakidái

854 /64 cont. /If the child's nose is not
514 clean, the mother carefully takes it between her teeth, presses
[123] its contents into her mouth, and spits them out. The women
found it most unhygienic that I blew my nose into a handkerchief
and carried it with me.

856 The little Surára and Pakidái learn to walk and talk at the
593 same age as the children of civilization, and they are aided by
their parents, siblings, and relatives. The pleasure of the rela-
tives is great and they are overjoyed when the child is able to
stand and walk and babble its first words, nápe=mother and
hápe=father.

862 e) Name-giving

[851] After the completion of the third year, a new, important
period of life begins. The nursing period is ended, and the child,
which hitherto belonged to the flesh and blood of the mother (325b),
has become an independent human being.

851 325b. This idea is very unusual for South
846 American Indians. It should be remem-
114 bered, however, that among most of the
171 tribes the so-called couvade, the men's
842 childbed, is practiced. Karl von den
Steinen, who has examined the psycho-
logical basis of this custom, says that in
this case the child, whether it be a boy or
girl, is "the little father," so to speak, a
part of the father, that is, a bit of his body.
(K. von den Steinen, 1894, pp. 334 ff.)
"The activity of the mother in this con-
nection is compared to that of the soil,
which receives the seed." (von Spix and
von Marthus, 1831, p. 1339.)

000 has become an independent human being. Now it is also given a
● 553 name, which is taken from the animal or vegetable kingdom. The
776 name is given to the father, when he offers his prayers in snuff-powder
[182] intoxication, by the gigantic animal and plant spirits living on

Surfira
Pakidai

/64 cont. /

high mountain ridges -- hekura --, who represent the intermediaries to Poré and Perimbó, the joint Supreme Being of these Indians (see pp.197/199). The particular animal or plant whose name a child bears is regarded as a sort of "spiritus familiaris" throughout its life. This is linked to the idea that the fate of the child has now become identical in essence with them; that is to say, good fortune, but also the suffering and dying of animals and plants are transferred to the like-named human beings.

The use of animal names corresponds to the nagualistic ideas and customs which Eduard Seler mentions in his monograph /65/ on Michuacan /Michoacán/ (326), while plant names are

326. Seler, 1908, pp. 104/05.

also included under the same aspect by the Surfira and Pakidai. The name "nagual," according to Seler, is derived from the Aztec word naualli = disguise (327). In place of nagualism, however, the

327. Seler, 1904, pp. 75/76.

technical term "tonalism" may also be used (Aztec tonalli = someone's destiny, fate, soul, spirit...) (328).

328. Haekel, 1958, p. 45.

On the day of the name-giving the children are given a tonsure such as is worn by all adults of both sexes. It is shaved off with the sharpened side of a split piece of reed (taquara -- Guadua sp.). Simultaneously they are attired for the first time in the hip cord of cotton or plant fibers, which they may then never remove up to the end of their lives, not even while bathing or during sleep. The cord must, of course, be renewed occasionally, but this is done in all secrecy. At the time of the donning of the hip cord by little boys, the penis is tied up, with the preputium held fast under the cord by means of a loop (Ill. 22). From now on the penis must no longer hang down, for this would be an offense against good form. On festive occasions a belt of cotton is also tied around children (see pp. 64 ff.).

/470 cont./

512 men. Some of them sing in singsong voices to influence the
[276] spirits, while others wander around like drunks. A few do not
take any "yopo" at all. These "yopo" cantilenas generally last
for about two hours.

In the afternoon a few more women, including some of
those who were in the conuco in the morning, go out to look for
/471/ firewood. Other women devote themselves to spinning
cotton. At about 5:00 in the afternoon the women and girls
go down to the stream to fill all the gourds or totumas.

[824] A little before dark, the evening meal ends. Palm leaves
[721] are placed so as to obstruct the entrances to the paths against
[776] the coming of wandering spirits and also to make greater diffi-
culty for any attacking band coming from an enemy settlement.
Every house lights its own fire and prepares for the night. At
about 7:00 P. M. all is silent.

[535] But if the moon comes out, the women and children may
[533] continue singing and dancing until well into the night. Or when
[203] there are visitors who arrived during the day, there might be
[594] crooning of news throughout the night, until the coming of the
sun puts an end to it.

Names

• 553 Every individual receives a name given by his parents. Un-
551 til the child receives a name, he is called by any of the standard
names that are applied to small children. The use of these standard
names is usually prolonged for several years after the boy or girl
has received his own name. It is taboo to give one person the
name of another. There are no homonyms or namesakes. An
individual might be given the name of a plant, an animal, an
action, an aspect, or sometimes simply be given some name
invented by his parents.

551 Nicknames are given freely. Some have a root, others do
not. Usually they are very descriptive and frequently very biting.

It is not good manners to call a person by his name, if it
can be avoided. It is always better to say: the older brother of
so-and-so, the older sister of so-and-so, the husband of so-and-so,
the father of so-and-so, or the mother of so-and-so.

8 · DOING FIELDWORK AMONG THE YANOMAMÖ

114 it as just a peculiarity of the subhuman foreigner. When I did give in, my hut quickly
 123 filled with Indians, each demanding a sample of the food that I had given one of them.
 If I did not give all a share, I was that much more despicable in their eyes.

A few of them went out of their way to make my meals unpleasant, to spite me for not sharing; for example, one man arrived and watched me eat a cracker with honey on it. He immediately recognized the honey, a particularly esteemed Yanomamö food. He knew that I would not share my tiny bottle and that it would be futile to ask. Instead, he glared at me and queried icily, "Shaki!"⁴ What kind of animal semen are you eating on that cracker?" His question had the desired effect, and my meal ended.

Finally, there was the problem of being lonely and separated from your own kind, especially your family. I tried to overcome this by seeking personal friendships among the Indians. This only complicated the matter because all my friends simply used my confidence to gain privileged access to my cache of steel tools and trade goods, and looted me. I would be bitterly disappointed that my "friend" thought no more of me than to finessé our relationship exclusively with the intention of getting at my locked up possessions, and my depression would hit new lows every time I discovered this. The loss of the possession bothered me much less than the shock that I was, as far as most of them were concerned, nothing more than a source of desirable items; no holds were barred in relieving me of these, since I was considered something subhuman, a non-Yanomamö.

The thing that bothered me most was the incessant, passionate, and aggressive demands the Indians made. It would become so unbearable that I would have to lock myself in my mud hut every once in a while just to escape from it: Privacy is one of Western culture's greatest achievements. But I did not want privacy for its own sake; rather, I simply had to get away from the begging. Day and night for the entire time I lived with the Yanomamö I was plagued by such demands as: "Give me a knife, I am poor!"; "If you don't take me with you on your next trip to Widokaiya-teri I'll chop a hole in your canoe!"; "Don't point your camera at me or I'll hit you!"; "Share your food with me!"; "Take me across the river in your canoe and be quick about it!"; "Give me a cooking pot!"; "Loan me your flashlight so I can go hunting tonight!"; "Give me medicine . . . I itch all over!"; "Take us on a week-long hunting trip with your shotgun!"; and "Give me an axe or I'll break into your hut when you are away visiting and steal one!" And so I was bombarded by such demands day after day, months on end, until I could not bear to see an Indian.

It was not as difficult to become calloused to the incessant begging as it was to ignore the sense of urgency, the impassioned tone of voice, or the intimidation and aggression with which the demands were made. It was likewise difficult to adjust to the fact that the Yanomamö refused to accept "no" for an answer until or unless it seethed with passion and intimidation—which it did after six months. Giving in to a demand always established a new threshold; the next demand would be for a bigger item or favor, and the anger of the Indians even greater if the demand was not met. I soon learned

• (553)

⁴"Shaki," or, rather, "Shakiwä," is the name they gave me because they could not pronounce "Chagnon." They like to name people for some distinctive feature when possible. *Shaki* is the name of a species of noisome bee; they accumulate in large numbers around ripening bananas and make pots of themselves by eating into the fruit, showering the people below with the debris. They probably adopted this name for me because I was also a nuisance, continuously prying into their business, taking pictures of them, and, in general, being where they did not want me.